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BARRAGA: NEWS FROM THE 11TH DISTRICT

The Cost of a Stamp Results in a \$200,000 County Expense

By: Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga

In July, an anonymous letter, costing 47 cents to send, was received by the three accrediting agencies (Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch) alleging that Suffolk County was involved in "creatively planned accounting fraud." The letter has no specifics, only generalities, no signatures, just obvious and intentional hyperbole. The reaction from the County is to spend upwards of \$200,000 of taxpayers' money on a forensic audit and a law firm in the name of "transparency." The County, for the last fifteen years, has had two reputable firms as outside auditors, Ernst and Young and Deloitte and Touche. If these firms found any irregularities they would have made specific recommendations to the County Comptroller, just as the Comptroller's Office makes recommendations when the Office conducts an audit for any non-for profit. Spending upwards of \$200,000 based on an anonymous letter is ridiculous. If someone is intimating fraud, then this anonymous letter should have been immediately turned over to the proper law enforcement agencies for review and investigation- the State Attorney General, the State Comptroller, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the County District Attorney. Under absolutely no circumstances should a \$200,000 expense be incurred and paid for by taxpayers. What happens next week when someone else sends an anonymous letter critical of some other County agency? Do we spend another \$200,000 in the name of transparency? It is no wonder people in Suffolk County are fed up when they see such foolish expensive decisions being made by elected and appointed officials who should know better.